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RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 6757  
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 0973  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY PRIORITY 1934  
RUEHOU/AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU PRIORITY 0289  
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 3673  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000469

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [ML](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: PROBLEM CHILD: ALGERIA'S GROWING IMPATIENCE WITH MALI

REF: ALGIERS 463

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Algeria has long considered Mali an ally in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, but is losing patience with its southern neighbor. During the week of April 25, the two major independent French-language dailies in Algiers, Liberte and El Watan, accused Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) of sheltering "GSPC terrorist cells" and letting drug smugglers operate freely. The papers also criticized ATT for his failure to implement the 2006 Algiers Accords, and his deteriorating relationship with the Tuareg rebels -- messages almost certainly fed to the press by the Algerian security services. As noted reftel, MFA Director General for African Affairs Lounes Magramane told us on May 3 that Algeria has grown frustrated and concerned by the situation in northern Mali, and fears that the area is "becoming a sanctuary for terrorists." Magramane said Mali has the capacity but lacks the political will to build effective relationships with northern tribes to cut off support for AQIM. END SUMMARY.

MALI AS PROBLEM CHILD

12. (C) Mali's anti-terrorism and law enforcement efforts are proving problematic for Mali's relationship with Algeria, which believes that ATT has focused too much time and energy on dealing with Tuareg rebels and not enough on fighting terrorists. The recent criticism of Mali in the Algerian press, which came on the heels of the recent hostage release, has portrayed Mali as a traditional ally in the fight against terrorism, but one whose behavior and loyalties are unreliable and possibly changing. At best, Algeria has accused Mali of being lax in its law enforcement and anti-terrorism efforts; at worst, it has tacitly accused ATT of providing a safehaven in which drug smugglers and terrorists can operate, allowing the drug trade to expand across the Sahel.

13. (C) Said Benmerad, a security expert at the Center for Applied Economic Research for Development (CREAD), told us recently that the message from Algeria, transmitted through the French-speaking press, is that Mali is "a very bad student in the fight against terrorism and that there can be no real cooperation, especially on counter-terrorism issues, when one partner is playing a double game." He went on to say that Algeria's primary goal in seeking an end to the Tuareg rebellion was to eliminate GSPC (later AQIM)

activities in the region, not simply to secure northern Mali.

Benmerad said that Algiers feels Bamako has not shown enough interest in this fight beyond seeking to crush the Tuaregs. An April 26 El Watan interview with ATT was a "provocation," he said, portraying the presence of terrorists in the Sahel as a danger first for Algeria.

#### BAMAKO PLAYING BOTH SIDES?

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14. (C) El Watan reporter Salima Tlemcani, who has longstanding ties to the Algerian security services, explained the situation after her April 26 interview with ATT. She told us that nowhere are tribal relations more important than in northern Mali. By exploiting relationships with Arab tribes in a security vacuum, GSPC/AQIM elements were able to establish a base in the region. Tlemcani observed that the tribes speak the same language and even have family ties with the Salafists in some cases. She pointed to the longstanding presence of hostages in Mali, specifically in the regions surrounding Timbuktu and Arouane, noting those locations have also hosted negotiations for their release. The real issue between Algiers and Bamako, Tlemcani suggested, "is the possibility that there is a tacit agreement between the GSPC and Bamako, by which Mali may be benefiting from ransom payments."

15. (C) One of Algeria's main complaints against ATT, as explained by MFA DG Magramane, is the Malian president's apparent unwillingness to put an end to Tuareg dissidence and fully respect the commitments undertaken in the 2006 Algiers

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Accords. Although ATT recognizes that not all Tuareg rebels laid down their arms, Algeria has pointed out that some of the weapons that were surrendered by the Tuaregs to the Malian military have been found on the bodies of deceased terrorists. In that regard Nacer Medjadel, chief editor of Algerian state TV Channel 3's "Carnet d'Afrique," remarked to us recently that "you can play with human identities, but you cannot play with serial numbers." According to Medjadel, ATT's lack of enforcement of the Algiers Accords has been one problem, but the hostages have been another. ATT has emphasized that all of the European hostages were taken outside Mali, accusing both Algeria and Tunisia of lax security enforcement. Magramane pointed out to us that regardless of where the hostages were taken, "they always seem to end up in Mali."

#### COMMENT

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16. (C) On the same day as ATT's El Watan interview, in which he claimed that Mali had never been a target of the Salafists, the press here reported that a dozen terrorists attacked a Malian military patrol in the Kidal region. With Algeria openly questioning ATT's will to be an effective counterterrorism partner, Magramane said the Algerian government now hangs its hopes on ATT's proposed summit of regional heads of state, to be held in Bamako. There has been no official response from Bamako in the Algerian media to the Algiers newspapers' allegations. The journalists we spoke to speculate that ATT does not want the row to jeopardize attendance at his summit, particularly by the Algerian and Libyan heads of state.

PEARCE